



Media Fairness Initiative

A Look at Bias in the News

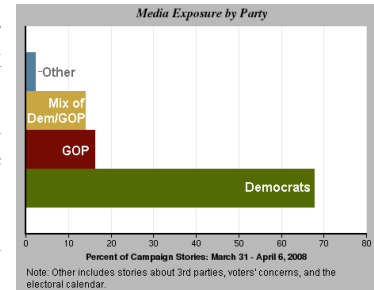


Democrats Dominate Presidential News Coverage

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Despite Sen. John McCain's extensive "Service to America" campaign tour, **Democrats received about four times more media exposure than McCain** during the week of March 31-April 6, according to the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). Sen. Barack Obama was a significant factor in 56 percent of the campaign stories studied in PEJ's Campaign Coverage Index. Sen. Hillary Clinton was next at 55 percent, while Sen. McCain was a distant third at 30 percent.

Even when McCain made the news, coverage was mixed. For example, ABC's March 31 evening newscast featured his visit to Mississippi where he was a naval flight instructor, but anchor Charles Gibson referred to it as a "carefully orchestrated campaign swing." And the short McCain story came after a much longer look at the Democratic campaign in Pennsylvania.



Media Portray Atheism More Favorably Than Religion

A new study by the Culture and Media Institute (CMI) shows that **the media portray atheism more favorably than religions**. CMI examined a broad spectrum of media to assess the news coverage of atheism in 2007. Key findings:

- Four of every five feature stories about atheism had a positive tone, while the rest were neutral. No feature stories were negative.
- 54 percent of atheist-themed stories included a religious counterpoint, but 71 percent of the Christian-themed stories included an atheist response or were written from an atheistic perspective.
- Six out of seven news organizations addressed the concerns and interests of atheists in the upcoming presidential election. **Only Republican candidates for President were asked how they would treat atheists.**

The CMI report concluded that **"the news media did not subject atheism or atheists to the same skepticism to which they subject Christians and Christianity."**

Pick the Quote

Last week, the Media Research Center held its annual "DisHonors Awards" for biased news reporting. One of the categories was designated as the "Barack Obama Gives a Thrill Up My Leg Award." Can you guess which of the following nominees won the award?

A "Today they gathered by the thousands at American University, sensing a moment of history. John F. Kennedy gave the commencement address here five months before he was shot. And today the audacity of hope had its rendezvous with destiny: The Kennedy clan anointed Barack Obama a son of Camelot." -- David Wright on ABC's World News, January 28, 2008.

B "They are really cool. They are Jack and Jackie Kennedy when you see them together. They are cool. And they're great-looking, and they're cool and they're young, and they're -- everything seems to be great....He may not win this thing because everybody in America is not going to be in a room with him somewhere. And it doesn't quite -- it worked with you on TV but, I tell you, when you're in the room, it's just like one of those things like Hillary Clinton, if you're in the room you understand what a likable person she is. If you're in with Obama, you feel the spirit. Moving." -- MSNBC's Chris Matthews talking about Barack Obama on NBC's Tonight Show, January 16, 2008.

Answer: B